



ACTA SANCTORVM

BEING XII POEMS

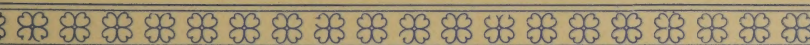
BY THE REV.

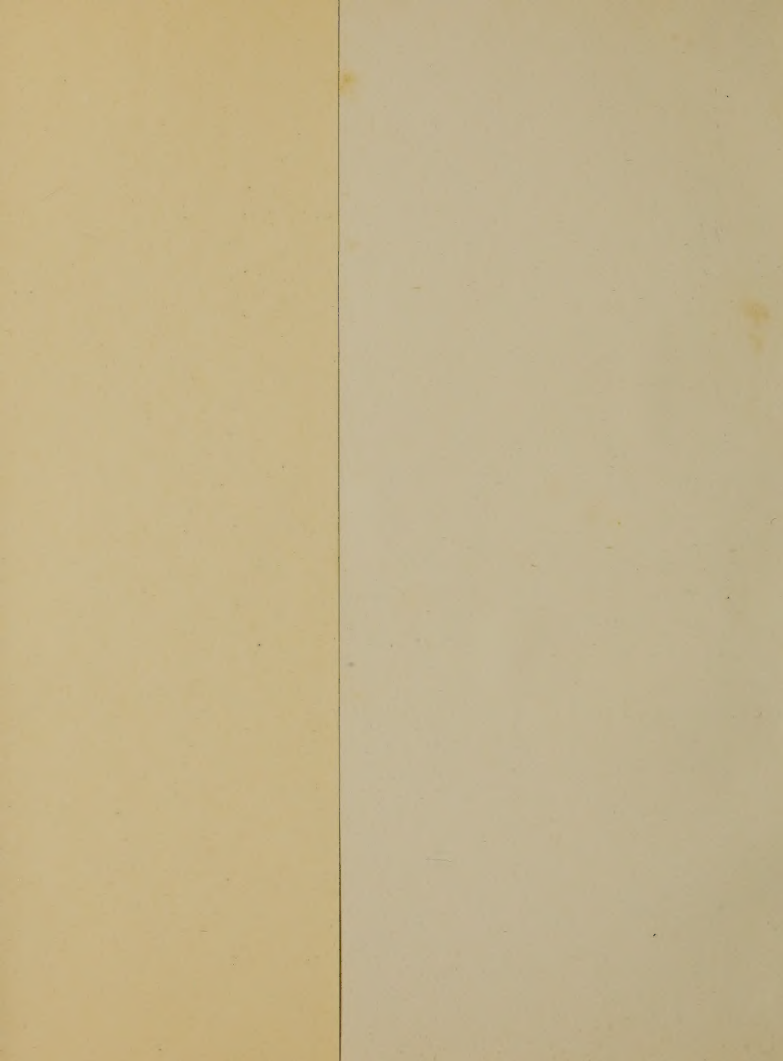
G. R. WOODWARD, M.A., MVS. DOC.

Editor of "The Cowley Carol Book," and "Songs of Syon"

A. R. MOWBRAY & CO. LTD.

LONDON AND OXFORD





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LONDON: 28 Margaret Street, Oxford Circus, W.1

OXFORD: 9 High Street

MILWAUKEE, U.S.A.: The Morehouse Publishing Co.

Printed in Great Britain

ACTA SANCTORUM

SAINTS OF THE

CHRISTIAN

AND THE

OF THE

First impression, 1924

THE

UPB

CARMINIS LEGES AMOR AVREORVM
NOMINVM PARVI FACIT, ET LOQVENDI
CVRA DE SANCTIS VITIOSA NON EST,
NEC RVDIS VNQVAM.

AVRELIJ PRVDENTII *Peristephanon* Lib. Hymnus iv.

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ACTA SANCTORVM



I

AN AFRICAN JUDGEMENT

IT was the King of Macedon,
A mighty prince, if ever one:
Of Philip's royal stem he came;
Great Alexander was his name.
This Monarch, once upon a time,
Made journey to a distant clime;
On pleasure, not on conquest, bent,
To inland Africa he went,
A country fair, whose rivers roll'd,
10 And mines and mountains teem'd, with gold.
The King went forth upon his ride,
With Knight and Noble at his side,
And some few servants in his train;
Full many a league o'er hill and plain
They travel far by night and morn,
On speedy dromedary borne,

- Or bunch of camel swift and tall
(‘Ships of the desert’ these men call).
On rode the troop, o’er dale and down,
20 Until they came unto the town,
The which should be their journey’s end;
Whence shortly homeward would they wend.
Across the champaign, bare and wide,
The Watchman from the tower espied
The stranger band, and straight would know
If it approach’d as friend, or foe.
Which ascertain’d, to meet the King,
And grant him royal welcoming,
The people of the city blive
30 Swarm forth as bees from out the hive.
The better sort in hand did bear
A gift of goblets, rich and rare,
Fit for a King, of quaint device,
As quince, or fruit of Paradise.
But everything was wrought of gold,
Of goodly shape, of price untold.
Said Macedon, ‘Is this the meat,
And this the fruit whereof ye eat?
Gramercy, Sirs: I am not come
40 To estimate the total sum
Of these your riches, or behold,
Still less receive, your plates of gold.
’Tis but my wish, whene’er I travel
Across the sea, or o’er the gravel,
Odysseus-like in olden time,

As written in Homeric rime,
To learn the customs, and to ken
The towns, and minds, of many men.'

Then Alexander, quick as thought,
50 Into the market-place is brought.
Where, so befel it, on a mat,
As was the manner there, there sat
The King, the Sovran of that place,—
Was hearing of a legal case.
This Judge, barbarian if he were,
Would give his verdict, fair and square.
A burgess stood before the King,
And ask'd him to decide a thing.
'I bought,' said he, 'but yesternight,
60 A sack-full chaff from yonder wight.
But when 'twas opened, lo! I found
A hoard therein, an hundred Pound.
The chaff is mine: not so the gold;
But he, by whom the chaff was sold,
I mean my fellow citizen,
Will not receive the hoard agen.
Therefore, O Monarch, give command
That he accept it out of hand,
And hold the treasure ('tis his own)
70 And leave me with my chaff alone.'
Thereto the seller answer made,
'If thou, good friend, be thus afraid
To keep a thing by means unjust,
On mine own part, I also must

Be careful not to take from thee
That which belongeth not to me.
I sold the pocket, bad or good,
And all within it, as it stood:
Therefore retain thou that thine is:
80 Thy Judgement, good my Lord, be this!
The King, and Judge, of whom I tell,
Belike another Daniël,
Enquiry made of number one,
If he were father of a son,
And hearing Aye, he ask'd the second,
If he were likewise to be reckon'd
The parent of a maiden child.
When to the Monarch meek and mild
Each litigant had answer'd, Yea,
90 'Well,' spake the Deemster, 'thus I say:
If ye be upright men and wise,
Ye both will do as I devise.
Go make your childer man and wife,
'Twill put a term to further strife.
The chaff, good masters, thus I sift:
The gold shall form the wedding-gift.'
Now Alexander, when he heard
The suitors, and the Judge's word,
Stood thunder-struck, and cried, 'Aha!'
100 'What!' ask'd the King of Africa,
'What! have I done amiss,' quoth he,
'That thou, my lord, astounded be?'
'By no means, Sir,' cried Philip's son,

'But 'tis not so in Macedon.'

'How then?' enquired the African.

Replied the Macedonian,

'Both disputants had lost their life,

In Europe, by the noose or knife;

And these their nuggets, ere the day

110 Were over-past, had found their way,

At our decree, into that best

Of places safe—the royal chest.'

Then rose the King, and oped his mouth,

(I mean the Sovran of the South),

And heaved in wonder both his hands.

'And doth the Sun shine on your lands?

And do the showers and dews of God

Descend to 'fresh your arid sod?'

Hereon King Alexander straight

120 Answer'd that godly Potentate,

'Yea, Sir: 'tis even so,' said he.

'Then,' spake the other, 'it must be

Thanks to the cattle on the hills,

The fishes in your meres and rills,

And to the birds upon the spray:

For on such manner men, I say,

The Sun should never shine at all,

Nor rain, nor clouds with fatness, fall.'

II

SAINT BARBARA

MAID AND MIGHTY MARTYR

(*Dec. 4, A.D. 303.*)

GIVE ear, ye children, high or low!
Full sixteen hundred years ago
At Heliópolis, a town
In Egypt, when the regal crown
Was worn by Prince Maximiän,
There dwelt a certain wealthy man,
That had Dióscorus to name;
Of noble stock and race he came.
In matters of belief, he held
10 With pagan doctrine, as of eld.
No man had greater zeal than he
For idols and idolatry.
Dióscorus in early life
Had taken to himself a wife,
A comely, well-born, wealthy dame,
In rank his peer, in creed the same:
But she had died before the time,
Whereof I tell you now in rime,
And left (God wot) her lonely spouse,

20 To mourn his loss in home and house ;
His only joy, a maiden child,
The offspring of that mother mild ;
Dear to her father's heart was she :
The girl was known as Barbary.

When Barbary had seen, I guess,
Some fifteen winters, more or less,
Dióscorus was seized with fear
Lest he might lose his daughter dear ;
Lest, for her beauty's sake, or gold,
30 Some suitor, were he young or old,
Might come, this damsel for to woo,
And Barbary agree thereto,
Whatso her father would or no.
As said the poet long ago,
'There n'is no grey goose on the mere
That findeth not her partenere.'
And therefore, that he might not part
With her, the darling of his heart,
Because of Barbary's great beauty,
40 Him thought 'twas prudence, and his duty,
To guard his daughter from the ken
And sight of whatsoever men.
Accordingly it came to pass,
If not within a tower of brass,
Yet in a tower of stone and brick,
With walls exceeding high and thick,
The maid, the lady Barbary,
Became a second Danaë.

No miser e'er kept hoard of gold
50 In safer chest or stronger hold.
But ah! 'twas cruel thus to cage
So fair a bird, so young of age.
Here Barbary was set to book;
And kindly to her task she took,
Increased in wisdom, wit and lore,
And loved her study more and more.
In little time this maiden bright
Could all the Sevenfold Arts aright,
As Grammar and Arithmetick,
60 With Logick and with Rhetorick,
To speak not of Geometry,
Of Musick and Astronomy.
Here also, many a time and oft,
Upon her turret-roof aloft,
In solitude and quiet deep,
While other folk lay fast asleep,
Upon a clear and starry night
'Twas gentle Barbary's delight,
Until the dawn of morning grey,
70 To watch the Planets on their way,
And mark the Dog-star, Lion, Bear,
Orion, and the Pleiads fair.
Full oft the scholar thought upon
The wonders of Creatiön;—
The heavenly bodies, Sun and Moon,
Light, darkness, even, morning, noon,
The sky above, the earth below,

The hail and hoar-frost, ice and snow,
The shower and dew, the rain, the cloud,
80 The lightning, and the thunder loud,
The everlasting hills and mountains,
The fire and heat, the welling fountains,
The wind and tide, the floods and seas,
The meadows and the greenwood trees,
The beasts and cattle whatsoe'er,
The fish in flood, the fowl in air.
But, most, she ponder'd well, in mind,
On God himself, then on mankind.
In time she could no longer hold,
90 As by her parent taught of old,
With idols carven by the hand
Of common wright in Egypt-land,
Those images of wood or stone,
Of iron, ebon, bronze or bone.
By such false gods small store she set,
Though stranger to the Cross as yet.
Now Barbary, though forced to dwell
In lonely tower, had still heard tell
Of one, the marvel of his age,
100 A certain venerable Sage,
The which had shown the vanity
Of idol-cult in paganry,
And taught instead, by word and deed,
A better way, a holier Creed.
It was the greatest teacher then,
And other none than Origen,

Whose doctrine o'er the world was felt :
At Alexandria he dwelt.
Thus Barbary at home gan yearn
110 More of this new belief to learn.
Wherefore she wrote with ink and pen
A privy brief to Origen,
And, having set thereto her seal,
Dispatch'd it by a servant leal.
He found the Teacher in his chair,
Expounding to Mammæa there
(She was the Empress at that tide)
The Gospel of the Crucified.
To Origen it was no grief
120 To read the matter of this brief.
And he gave, as I understand,
An answer writ with his own hand.
And overmore, with good intent,
In guise of medicine man, he sent
To Barbary, that gentle maid,
An old disciple, wise and staid,
Of whom she learn'd the Faith of Christ,
And at his hand was soon baptized.
Before the time, whereof I say,
130 Dióscorus was gone away,
On pleasure or on business,
To some far part of heatheness.
But so it was, upon the day
Before he started on his way,
He straitly charged an architect,

From plans agreed on, to erect
Within his daughter's lofty tower
A goodly bath-room nigh her bower.
And he was building it, y-wis,
140 More for his daughter's use than his.
One day percase the Maiden fair
Came down the winding turret-stair
Like woman, curious to see
What manner room 'twas like to be.
The work was speeding well, she found,
And rising surely from the ground:
And every hand was working blive,
As busy bees within the hive.
The labourers, full many one,
150 Went to and fro with brick and stone,
Or mortar in the hod they bare,
While masons wrought with rule and square,
And made the thing exact and fine
By level and by plummet-line.
Thus, what with trowel, saw, and plane,
Rope, scaffold, ladder, pulley, crane,
The chamber was a-building fast,
Good workmanship, and like to last.
All this she saw; but last espied
160 A pair of windows side by side.
Then, calling for the Over-seer,
'Good master,' said she, 'lend an ear:
I am the lady of the place,
And charge you well, in any case,

- To make yon window, that I view,
 A triple light, instead of two.’
 ‘Fair lady,’ spake he, ‘out of hand,
 Fain would I do your least command;
 But ’tis my duty to fulfil
 170 My lord your father’s hest and will.’
 ‘Obey me,’ cried she: ‘that is all.
 The blame upon my shoulder fall!’
 When, after crossing o’er the foam,
 Dióscorus at length came home,
 He spake, in anger, words unmild
 To Barbary his only child.
 ‘Why, daughter, wherefore durst thou do
 A thing which thou shalt surely rue?
 The adage ran long time ago,
 180 But now the truth thereof I know.
 Whene’er the cat is far away,
 The mouse will venture forth to play.
 Thou art not like thy mother’s child
 To grow so wayward and so wild.
 Instead of two, as it should be,
 Come say what mean these windows Three.’
 ‘Nay, good my father, wax not wroth:
 And I will tell you, lief or loth,
 The reason of those windows Three
 190 Within the bath-room made for me.
 These Three in One, and One in Three
 Denote a holy mystery.
 And through this Triple light divine

The Sun of Righteousness doth shine,
Illuminating, as I ken,
The souls of Christian maids and men.
In him alone make I my boast,
In Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
But, father dear, I plainly see
200 Thy thoughts are ill concerning me,
Because I dare thus speak with thee
Anent the Holy Trinity.
Well callest thou me *Barbary*.
For why my speech is strange to thee.
Now certès, I thy daughter young
Address thee in barbarian tongue.
Now while the Maid was talking thus,
A change came o'er Dióscorus:
His love for Barbary of yore
210 Is turnèd into hatred sore.
He, bitter foeman, to the death,
Of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,
Like madman drew his sword to quell
The daughter once beloved so well.
She fled and hid within her bower
Upon the summit of her tower,
The heathen in full hue and cry.
But lo! the Lord of hosts on high
220 Told off an Angel bright, to go
Defend his handmaid from the foe.
Thus Barbary, that maiden bland,
Led forth by unseen Angel-hand,

Is taken to a distant spot,
Unknown to folk: it was a grot,
A cavern on a certain fell:
And there in safety did she dwell
Until a false goat-herd betray'd
The sanct'ry of this Christen maid.
Now, when thereof the father knew,
230 He from the cave his daughter drew.
She, bounden hand and foot, is led
Forth by the fore-locks of her head,
And by her parent, wild with rage,
Despite her sex and tender age
Is whipt, her tender body o'er,
With scorpions and with lashes sore.
But after all, the scourging rod,
By solace of Almighty God,
Became as pea-cock feather light;
240 So thought the Maiden Martyr bright.
Thence into prison is she cast,
And chain'd with fetter, strong and fast.
Meanwhile Dióscorus he ran
To seek the Consul Marciän,
A hater also he himselve
Of Christ and his Apostles Twelve.
Perchance the strong arm of the law
The Christian maid might over-awe.
'Twas all in vain. No Marciän
250 Nor any other living man,
No flattery, promise, threat, or bribe,

No punishment, nor jeer nor gibe,
Nor death, nor fiend himself could make
The Child, in any way forsake
Obedience to the Christian Creed.
'Twas labour lost, and vain indeed.
Whereon her pagan sire, unkind,
Whose heart was cold as winter-wind,
And harder than the marble-stone,
260 Led forth Saint Barbary alone
Up to a mountain, near the city,
And there, without remorse or pity,
Drew blade to do the deed of slaughter,
Yea, slew his only-gotten daughter.
Yet as the wretch came down the fell,
As doth the *Golden Legend* tell,
For shame, the welkin murky grew ;
A storm arose ; the wind it blew ;
And lo ! a flash, exceeding bright,
270 A triple fork of thunder-light,
Fell on the guilty father's head,
And number'd him among the dead.
And this was done, so thinketh me,
Thou Lily white, fair Barbary,
Red Rose in bush of bramble-thorn,
Thou Saint mid heathen bred and born,
Because thy life-blood from the clod
For speedy vengeance cried to God.
And therefore, on thy Natal day,
280 Due homage to thy faith we pay ;

And Holy Church, by East, by West,
Doth style thee MIGHTY-MARTYR blest,
Rejoicing that a bird so fair
To-day escaped the fowler's snare;
And may thy Lord to us assign
A mansion such as now is thine!

III

SAINT SWITHUN

(† July 2, 862 ; translated July 15, 971.)

SWITHUN, on his death-bed laid,
Thus to his disciples said,
'When my soul is pass'd to God,
Lay my body under sod,
Not within the Church, but out,
Porch or Chancel round about :
Where poor people dolven be,
Good enough that place for me.
Choose a spot where I may lie
Underneath the open sky,
Somewhere near the path, along,
And o'er, which the Faithful throng,
Fast or Feast-day, for to hear
Clerks a-singing in the queere,
When the bells do sweetly chime
Matin, Mass or Vesper-time.
There, until the latter day,
Swithun's body see ye lay.
On my grassy grave shall light
Sun by day and Moon by night,
While the blissful birds on wing

In their leafy chantry sing.
Frost and dew and rain withal
Lightly o'er my body fall!
This, by God's Almighty grace,
This shall be my resting-place,
Day by day, and year by year,
Till the Son of Man appear.'

30 Soon the passing bell gan toll
For good Bishop Swithun's soul.
Round his couch unseen there stood
In a circle Angels good,
Some afar the fiend to fray,
Some to bear his soul away.
When the Father fell asleep,
Sore did all his children weep,
Laid his relics in a chest;
'Bishop Swithun, take thy rest!'
40 When the *Requiem* was sung,
Came from far both old and young,
And, the Psalm *Placebo* said,
Swithun in his grave is laid,
Not in Chancel, Nave or Quire,
But, as did himself desire,
He is buried under clod
In the acre, own'd by God.

50 Afterward, the time was when
Certain good, but erring, men,
Grieving for Saint Swithun sore,
And to honour him the more,

Maugre Swithun's last request,
Sought to move him, bones and chest,
And to place him in a shrine,
Golden, costly, superfine:—

'Shame to leave the Saint a-cold,
Graven in the common mould,

One, the glory of his age,
Saint, Confessor, Doctor, Sage,
Faithful Shepherd, swift to keep

60 Tender care of lamb and sheep,
Founder eke of Churches new,
Town and country, not a few,

Guardian of buildings old,
Of the Faith defender bold,
Champion of lord and swain

'Gainst the foe, the hateful Dane,
Scribe and Scholar, Man of God,

In his Master's steps he trod,
Teacher of the royal youth

70 Alfred, (who did foster truth,
Learning, study, holy lore,

As no King had done afore ;
Alfred, whom "the Great" we call,
Learn'd of Swithun first of all):—

Therefore, near the Altar high,
In the Church must Swithun lie.'

In July, whenas the sun
Had his Fifteenth day begun,
Winchester, that famous town,

80 Saw a brave processioun,
People, drawn from West and East,
Abbot, Bishop, Deacon, Priest,
Prince and Peasant, high and low,
Rich and Poor, a-ganging go,
To translate upon that day
Swithun's bones from where they lay
To a shrine of beaten gold,
Of the which ye have been told.
Suddenly the sky gan lower,
90 First there fell a gentle shower,
Then it rain'd and rain'd full fast,
Like a water-spout at last.
God did from his bottles pour
Rain in torrents more and more.
Ne'er since Noë's days, I ween,
Such a deluge had been seen.
Thus the weather let the work
Of removing to the kirk
Relics of the Saint that day;
100 So the many went away.
On the morrow once agen
Came Lord Abbat and his men,
With the town folk many one,
To perform the thing undone
Yesterday; but still the same;
Down the rain in torrent came.
Nay, for Forty days in all,
Every day much rain did fall.

Hence arose the proverb old,

110 By our fathers to us told:—

'Saint Swithun day, gin ye do rain,

For forty days it will remain:

Saint Swithun day, an ye be fair,

For forty days 'twill rain nae mair.'

IV

ABRAM'S CHILDHOOD

IF Jewish Rabbi's tale be sooth,
In childhood and in early youth,
Within a cavern, mirk as night,
Was Abram nurtured, out of sight,
Apart from men, for safety sake;
For Nimrod fain his life would take.
Yet in that darksome den upon
The boy the light of heaven shone.
Young Abram often, early, late,
10 As touching God would meditate,
'Who is my Maker?' he gan ask:
To solve the problem was his task.
When sixteen winters now were past,
He from the cave outstept at last.
As yet, ne'er had he view'd the sight
Of heav'n and earth: now with delight,
With wonderment and mickle awe
The world of Nature Abram saw.
When rose the Sun with orbit round,
20 Flat Abram fell upon the ground,
And cried, 'This is my God, I guess,
The mirrour of all loveliness.'

Up to the zenith of the sky
He follow'd him with wistful eye,
Beheld him hour by hour descend
And then below th' horizon wend.
When day was gone, and night drew near,
He saw the silver Moon appear.
Soon o'er the heav'n above, afar,
30° Began to twinkle many a star.
Perchance 'twas God, that lesser light,
'Among her spangled sisters bright.'
But Moon, and planets every one,
Set or the rising of the Sun.
Thus Abram, full of honest thought,
Unto his father Terah sought,
T' expound the matter, saying thus,
'Who is the Maker, sir, of us?
Who wrought this seemly sight of bliss,
40° Sky, earth and all that therein is?'
Then pointed Terah with his hand
Toward the ledge, whereon did stand
His household gods, the Teraphim,
His idols many, neat and trim:
And said to Abram, 'Son,' said he,
'These images the Godhead be.'
Though thereupon spake Abram nought:
The less he said, the more he thought.
So when that Terah forth was gone,
50° And Abram in the house alone,
Said Abram to himself, "'Twere good

To prove these images, of wood,
Or stone, or silver, brass or gold,
Y-carved by hand, or cast in mould,
Whether they dead be, or alive.
Then with the word he sped full blive,
And set before them each a dish,
Right savoury, of flesh or fish,
Crying, 'Ye gods, if quick ye be,
60 Take, eat your servant's present free.'
But, being nought but stock and stone,
The idols moved not, back nor bone.
'How can my father,' ask'd the youth,
'Believe, and hold for very truth,
Such handiwork to be his God?'
So thereupon he took a rod,
And brake, or e'er the game was done,
The idols, all excepting one.
Then in the sole survivor's hand
70 He set upright the fore-said wand.
And, running to his father's side,
'Come hither quickly, Sir,' he cried.
'Your foremost God hath slain the others,
And beaten all his weaker brothers.'
'Do way,' quoth Terah full of rage,
'I am thy father, thrice thine age.
Thou gabbest, boy: thy talk is idle,
Learn thou betimes thy tongue to bridle.
Yond could not, as thou sayest, quell
80 His fellows, for I wot full well

That by my hands y-wrought was he.'
'Nay, father, wax not wroth with me:
But, if I take thee at thy word,
Say how can yonder be thy Lord,
Who no-how can his might employ,
As I have done, that am a boy?
That God I worship, who gave birth
To man, and fashion'd heav'n and earth.
But as for idols, great or small,
90 Them vain I reckon, one and all,
Not worth in price a garden leek:
For mouths have they, yet cannot speak,
And eyes thereto, that cannot see,
And ears as deaf as deaf can be,
And hands have they, that handle not,
And feet that cannot walk, God wot,
And though possest of tongue and throat,
They cannot talk, nor sing a note.
So, be not angry, father mine;
100 Of such no good can I divine.
Nay, every wright and cunning smith,
That worketh wood, or stone, wherewith
To make an idol-god from thence,
Is like his work, bereft of sense:
And so is every child of dust
That putteth in his idol trust.'

While Abram spake, that was so young,
Old Terah wisely held his tongue.
Ere long men made this matter known

- 110 To Nimrod on his royal throne.
 Which King soon bade his catch-pole call
 Young Abram to the palace-hall.
 'Fond youth,' cried he, 'thou must before
 My gods fall down, and them adore.
 Or else, the furnace, bright and hot,
 Shall be thy guerdon and thy lot.'
 For, if I rightly understand,
 The seers and sages of the land
 Had prophesied, at Abram's birth,
- 120 That he would make of idols mirth,
 Quell images, and overmore
 Destroy the gods, that men of yore
 Had held in worship and renown.
 Hence Nimrod, King, that ware the crown,
 Would view the youth that did withstand
 The gods of his fraternal land.
 'Sir King,' began the dauntless boy,
 'Thy sceptre mayst thou long enjoy!
 But tell me, Sir, withouten nay,
- 130 Who is thy god, if ask I may?'
 Then answer made that hunter-king,
 'Than any other kind of thing
 I hold that Fire is stronger far:
 So Fire and Heat my gods they are.'
 'But, Sir,' quoth Abram, 'man and wench
 Know well that Water fire will quench:
 And Water too, by night and morn,
 Is on the rain-cloud swiftly borne:

And clouds aloft, the sooth to say,
140 Are by the wind soon chased away.
But men, for use domestic, tame
As well as water, fire and flame.
Hence, by thy showing, so think me,
Mankind of all things strongest be.'
'E'en so,' broke in that boastful King.
'And know thou, in my reckoning,
The strongest of the strong am I.
I speak the truth, nor gab, nor lie!'
Then added he with scornful frown,
150 'Boy, in my worship, fall thou down;
Else, in the twinkling of an eye,
Shalt thou on iron bed-stead lie.
O'er faggots lit and fed with oil,
Thou quickly, back and side, shalt broil.'
Then Abram spake with smiling cheer,
'Yet once again thy servant hear:
I saw yon Sun rise clear and bright
But yester-morn, and set at night.
Great Sovran, give the Sun thy hest
160 To set by East, and rise by West.
Command him now to beam by night,
And in the day withhold his light.
Now, if he will thy voice obey,
Then will I do as thou dost say,
And worship thee my God and Lord.'—
No time to speak another word.
Child Abram lo! is bound full fast,

And into a burning furnace cast.
But though the flames were ne'er so hot,
170 They spared the boy, and hurt him not.
His Angel kept him safe from harm,
And took him gently in his arm,
And made the fiery oven cool,
As dew, or air at time of Yule.
And from that furnace forth there went
A perfume, sweet as lily-scent.
And out he stept, that saintly Child,
Unsunged, unhurt and undefiled.
Soon after ('tis no idle story)
180 To Abram came the King of Glory,
And thus gave counsel and command.
'Go quit thy home in Chaldee land,
And cross beyond Euphrates' flood
To Canaän, that country good,
A land that flows with milk and honey.
Thine shall it be, for love, not money.
There will I bless thee both with health,
And flocks and herds, and mickle wealth
There will I make thy seed to be
190 E'en as the sand on shore of sea,
And countless as the starlets bright,
That stud the cope of heav'n by night:
And ghostly blessing shall beside
On thee and thine be multiplied:
Nay, all the families of earth
Shall testify unto thy worth,

And men hereafter shall thee call
The Father of the Faithful all,
For thou obey'st my beck and nod,
200 And trustest in the One true God.'

V

SAINT CHRYSOSTOM

(JOHN GILDENMOUTH)

(*A.D. 344-407.*)

THREE hundred years and forty-four
Were gone since Maiden Mary bore
That blessed Babe, the Son of God,
Whose feet the land of Jewry trod,
When there was born at Antioch,
Of gentle blood and noble stock,
A certain child, to whom anon
His parents gave the name of John.
The father's name I cannot tell,
10 (Though God and Angels know it well).
He died an early death, I find,
And left his wedded wife behind,
(Arthusiä she had to name,
A virtuous and Christian dame),
To educate—her only joy—
Her husband's little orphan-boy.
Though many a suitor in that land
Besought this widow's heart and hand,
Yet second husband would she none,

20 But lived for God, and for her son.
Soon little John was taught to call
On Jesus Christ, and there withal,
Say *Paternoster*, and recite
The Creed set forth at Nice aright.
Arthusiä, that godly mother,
Was like to Loïs, such another:
Or else, I ween, she was a second
Eunicè to be rightly reckon'd;
Those Saints, who taught, in days of yore,
30 Young Timothy his Bible-lore.
E'en so Arthusiä betime
Taught little John, in prose or rime,
The Testament, both Old and New,
And lessons well therefrom she drew.
Till he could many a text by rote,
And wholesome words of Scripture quote.
In other books, of worldly kind,
Our little clergeon lagg'd behind;
For when 'twas time to go to school,
40 And study under rod and rule,
At seven years old, this gentle boy,
Had little taste for 'Tales of Troy,'
Nor could he master well the trick
Of Euclid and Arithmetick.
But seem'd, alike at work and play,
As one whose thought was far away,
Until his comrades of the school
Dub John a dullard and a fool,

- And turn his manner into mock;
 50 And he became their laughing-stock.
 Such banter and such words un-gent
 Sore hurt this holy innocent;
 Till so befel it on a day,
 School-ward, or homeward, on his way,
 Before or after play or work,
 He drew into a neighbour kirk,
 With tearful eye and heavy heart.
 Alone, and from his mates apart,
 Adown he knelt, and traced with awe
 60 Upon his breast the sign of Tau (†),
 As Christen people, most or least,
 Are wont in Western Church and East.
 First Πάτερ ἡμῶν, then said he,
 Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη,
 And ask'd the Blessed Maid to plead
 With Jesus for a lad in need.
 A voice here whisper'd, 'Darling child,'
 (It was our Lady, meek and mild)
 'Upon my mouth imprint a kiss;
 70 Much wisdom shall be thine for this.'
 'Twas done; and, each succeeding day,
 At lesson-time, the sooth to say,
 This little child, of whom I tell,
 O'er all his fellows gan excel
 In knowledge and in eloquence.
 Men wonder'd how it came and whence:
 And when he show'd the manner how,

Men marvell'd all the more, I trow.
And lo! his lips—most strangest thing—
80 Bore seal-mark of a golden ring.
Soon after, when abroad his fame
Was spread, to *John*, his Christian name,
Men added *Chrysostom* moreo'er,
Name now well-known from shore to shore;
'Tis *Bocca d'oro* in the South;
In English tongue, *John Goldenmouth*.

VI
SAN GIOVANNI GVALBERTO
OR
THE FORGIVING KNIGHT
(† July 12, A.D. 1073.)

NOW, Christian children, sit ye still,
And hearken, if it be your will,
And ye shall hear a tale of mine
About a certain Florentine.
Giovanni was his Christian name;
Of old and noble race he came.
One brother had he, and no more,
The which the name of Hugo bore.
Right dear was either unto other,
10 Giovanni and his younger brother.
Whenas to manhood both were grown,
And twenty years, or more, were flown,
Hugo to death was foully done,
In some affray, and that by one,
Who was his friend in time afore,
But after secret malice bore.
Now 'twas the custom of the day
That he, the next of kin, should slay

The murderer, wherever found,
20 Upon, above or under ground,
For, 'Whoso blood of man doth shed,
By man shall he be put to dead.'
Hence Giovanni, mourning sore
His brother's loss, avengement swore.
His mother's tears, his father's woe,
His friends' and neighbours' grief also,
Sent Giovanni off in speed
To trace the doer of the deed.

Befel it so, upon a day,

30 It was Good Friday, sooth to say,
When shadows now were growing long,
And when 'twas time for Evensong,
From Florence, wherein he had spent
The day, Gualberto homeward went,
Back to his father's country-seat.
He pass'd along a narrow street,
Beneath a gateway, old and tall,
And so beyond the City wall.
In silence, sad, he walk'd beside
40 The bank of Arno's yellow tide.
When now near half-way up the hill,
(The very spot may seen be still)
Where bore the road to-ward the right,
San Miniato full in sight,
Within a some-del narrow place,
He suddenly stood face to face
With the assassin, whom he sought,

And drew his dagger quick as thought.
'Now have I found mine enemy :
50 Vile wretch, prepare to die,' quoth he.
That other, miserable wight,
Caught unaware, in hopeless plight,
Alone, unarmèd, as he was,
Fell down a-groveling on the grass.
Then, stretching out his arms full wide,
In figure of THE CRUCIFIED,
He gan adjure Gualberto there,
And cried, 'A! Mercy, spare me, spare!
Bel ami, of thy charity,
60 For love of him, who died for thee
This very day upon the Tree,
At Golgotha, on Calvary.
For him, and his sweet Mother's sake,
Forbear thy servant's life to take.'
Was it a going of the breeze
A tip-top on yon mulberry-trees,
Or turtle-dove on olive spray
That *Pax vobiscum* seem'd to say,
I know not : but, as with a dart,
70 Gualberto he was prickt at heart.
He paused, he sheathed his lifted sword,
Bethought him of his dying Lord,
Who hanging on the Rood was lief
To shrive the poor repentant Thief,
And pardon, of his own free-will,
The men that durst his life-blood spill.

Gualberto heard a voice, did say,
'Revenge is mine: I will repay.'
The Master's promise came to mind,
80 'The merciful shall mercy find.'
Sooth, he was like some frigate set
Within a place where two seas met.
Love of his brother drew him hither:
But love of Christ constrain'd him thither.
If grief for Hugo press'd him sore,
Yet love for God prevail'd the more.
Thus, in much agony of mind,
He call'd upon his Saviour kind,
90 Whose heart by soldier's spear was riven,
'As I myself would be forgiven,
Lord, aid me to forgive the foe
That laid my only brother low.'
Thus, and in *Pater-noster* while,
Gualberto did him reconcile
That holy day, that solemn hour,
With this poor caitiff in his power.
E'en ere the setting of the sun,
Gualberto's vengeful wrath was done.
With out-straight hand from off the ground
100 He lift his bedesman safe and sound;
Nay, bade the villain's terror cease,
And seal'd the word with kiss of peace.
Then either leave of other took.
As it is writ in olden book,
Gualberto, this Forgiving Knight,

Went on his way with foot-step light.
 His pulse a-beating double time,
 The while he thought upon the crime,
 That, but for Jesu's saving grace
 110 He had committed in that place.
 His heart was wo-begone and sad;
 Yet who as he now half so glad?
 As up the narrow way he trod,
 That led into the house of God,
 San Miniato's holy shrine,
 Salt tears gan fill Gualberto's eyne.
 It was about the hour of Six:
 He knelt before the Crucifix
 Carved cunningly, of cedar wood,
 120 That on a certain Altar stood.
 There told the Knight his bedes full fast,
 Repenting of his errors past,
 Entreating Christ to pardon all
 His trespasses, or great or small,
 Who, in his Sermon on the Mount,
 Bade his disciples take no count
 Of debts to them from others due,
 But grant forgiveness, full and true.
 So, oft before THE CRUCIFIED
 130 Gualberto, 'Jesu, mercy!' cried.
 But lo! as 'tis averr'd and told
 By writers true, by Saints of old,
 The figure on the Rood was seen
 To bow the head, and forward lean.

With out-bent arms and smiling face,
Our Saviour gave the Knight embrace,
And, pledge of pardon, sign of bliss,
Clean shrove him with an holy kiss,
As though the Lord did plainly say
140 'Well done! Good servant mine, to-day.'

Now, gentles all, who still be here,
And to my lay have lent an ear,
Mind ye the burden of my song;—
Forgive whoso have done ye wrong:
Again I say, Forgive, and go,
And, as Gualberto, do ye so!

VII

BABE AMBROSE AND THE SWARM OF BEES

(c. 340 A.D.)

ONCE in the olden town of Trier,
(Gone sithence many hundred year)
There dwelt together, free from strife,
A blissful couple, man and wife.
A prefect, and from Rome he came :
Ambrose this worthy had to name.
To whom a boy exceeding fair
His spouse (her name I know not) bare.
Him also Ambrose did they call,
10 Now household word be-knownn to all.
Befel it so, upon a day
Babe Ambrose in his cradle lay ;
Where, for to stint him of his weep,
His mother rockt her child to sleep.
While there he slept with open mouth,
Lo! were it from the north or south,
Borne on the balmy summer-breeze,
There came a swarm of golden bees.

20 Well seen by many in that place,
They settled harmless on his face,
And throng'd within and out full blive,
As though his mouth had been their hive,
But after soon they took to flight
Aloft, and vanish'd out of sight.

Hereon old Ambrose in delight
Made prophecy, with reason right:
'This silly babe one day,' said he,
'A marvellous worthy man shall be.'

VIII

NOË'S VINEYARD

OR

WINE A BLESSING: DRUNKENNESS A CURSE

WHEN that Noë first began
Planting trees, as husbandman,
While he digg'd and delved the loam
Round about his house and home,
Measuring with rod and line
Where to set the fruitful vine,
Satan came, the work to scan.

S. 'Pray what dost thou, good my man?'

N. 'Sir,' said he with smiling cheer,
10 'I do plant a vineyard here.'

S. 'What is that? I fain would know.'

N. 'Vine a 'licious grape doth grow:
Black or white, and dry or green,
'Tis exceeding sweet, I ween.
From the berry of the vine,
Trode in wine fat, ripe and fine
Cometh, through the vintner's art,
Wine to glad the human heart.
Bunch of grape, destroy it not:

- 20 Blessing is therein, God wot.
Vine, it is a tree of price,
Brought from garth of Paradise.'
- S. 'In the planting of this tree
I will lend a hand,' quoth he.
Not for nought is Satan gone:
Creatures four he brought anon,
Lambkin, lion, sow and ape.
To enrich the tree of grape,
Smartly Satan on the floor
- 30 Slew his victims (all the four),
Let the blood of every one
Round about the vine-tree run.
Hereby cometh it to pass,
Having drunk his maiden glass,
Every wight (full sure I am)
Harmless is as any lamb.
After quaffing something more,
Like a lion, man will roar,
Acting vainly in his mirth,
- 40 As he had no peer on earth.
Should he drink excess of wine,
He becometh straight a swine,
Greedily in stye and byre
Wallowing mid mud and mire.
Surfeited with blood of grape
Him behold a filthy ape,
Reeling to and fro, not knowing
Where he be, or whither going.

IX

THE FIRST MIRACLE AT CANA OF GALILEE

Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis

HOLY Mary, pray for us:
Jesus, an it may be thus,
Shall, in answer to thy plea,
Grant whate'er we ask of thee.
It was ever thus of old.
In the Gospel we are told,
When thou wast in Galilee,
And in Cana, he with thee,
Son with Mother, each a guest
10 At a certain wedding-fest.
Gentle Maiden, on that day,
As it was thy wonted way,
When thou saw'st, with woman's eye,
Shortage of the wine supply,
Noting well the sorry case
Of the master of the place,
Sympathizing with mine host
And the feasters, least and most,

20 On thy Son thou diddest call ;
Though he knew the matter all,
As he kenneth everything,
God on earth, in heaven King.
Not of him requiring aught,
But with care for others fraught,
Looking, in that hour of need,
Unto Jesus for the lead,
Trusting to his loving skill
For to bring good out of ill,
Thou didst to thy Son Divine
30 Simply say : ' They have no wine.'
' Lady, what is that,' spake he,
' Unto thee and unto me ?
Not as yet mine hour is come.'
That is of his answer sum.
Not thereby did he intend
Thy concern to reprehend,
Nor to slight thee, Mother fair,
But to go before thy prayer,
Whom he honoured as he could,
40 And as Son in duty should.
This alone he signified,
How that the appointed tide,
When his wonders, passing thought,
Should in Jewry-land be wrought—
Miracles for all and some,—
Was, as yet, scarce fully come.
Ne'ertheless he, for thy sake,

Pity on his folk did take,
And at thine implied request
50 Did, 'fore serving-man and guest,
There and then, with word divine,
Redden water into wine.
Hereby, Maiden, 'tis well seen
How thy Child, the Nazarene,
God omnipotent and kind,
Did on earth fulfil thy mind.
So, in heaven, pray for us:
Jesus, an it may be thus,
As before, shall, at thy plea,
60 Grant whate'er we ask of thee.

X

THE CROWN IMPERIAL

WHEN on the Mount of Calvary
Christ on Good Friday clomb the Tree,
Where gladly, nobly, he did take
His death for sinners and their sake,
Then, in the Gospel as we read,
Full loth to view the awful deed,
The sun at high-noon hid his light,
The moon and stars withdrew from sight.
Then trembled mother earth: the brook
10 Ran backward, and the mountain shook:
The beast was troubled: in the dale
Was heard no song of nightingale.
Then all the lilies of the field,
Considering their Maker, seal'd
Their mournful eyes, and bow'd the head
Because the Prince of life lay dead.
All, save the bulb that bears the name
Of Crown Imperial. Of the same
'Tis thought that it, and it alone
20 Of all the spring-flowers then full-blown,
Remain'd erect, with haughty eye

A-gazing on the dark'ned sky,
Until an Angel came, with dread
And trembling hand, and touch'd his head,
And let fall tearlets five aslant,
One on each chalice of the plant.

From that day onward to this hour
Hath Crown Imperial bent his flow'r,
O'ercome with shame, repentance, woe.
30 Now ne'er doth Easter come and go
But you shall see within this bloom
(And thus 'twill be till day of doom)
Five drops of nectar crystal-clear,
Each one of them an Angel-tear,
In memory of the wounds, the five,
Of Christ, once dead, but now alive.
So, white or yellow be his gown,
Or else, in colour, copper-brown,
These trophies bright th' Imperial Crown
40 Bears under head-piece drooping down.

XI

INJURIES AND BENEFITS

WHEN injured, O my soul, thou must
Inscribe thy wrongs upon the dust.
Forgive, forget: or, staff in hand,
Go pen thy sorrows on the sand,
Where shall the rising tide efface
Of any petty grievance trace.
But of thy benefits, let not
The least thereof be e'er forgot:
These from thy mind must ne'er depart:
10 These lock thou up within thy heart:
These recollect thou, these alone,
And carve them deep on granite-stone.

XII

ABRAHAM AND THE OLD FIRE-WORSHIPPER

LISTEN, sirs, while I rehearse
Tale of Abraham in verse.
While he sat, as oft afore,
Near his tent, outside the door,
Gazing o'er the country-side
At the hour of even-tide,
Ere night maketh road-way dark,
Lo! the worthy Patriarch
Spied a stranger drawing near.
10 He was agèd : five-score year
O'er his head had pass'd already ;
And although his gait was steady,
On a staff the old man leant,
Dustifoot, and slow he went,
Being weary of his way
Through a long hot summer-day.
Abraham from off his seat
Rose in reverence, for to greet
The unknown, and, as 'twas meet,
20 Wash the way-worn pilgrim's feet,

Then made ready, bade him dine,
Brought him flesh, with bread and wine.
But, when Abraham was ware
That the comeling said no prayer,
Ere he sat him down to eat,
Nor gave blessing after meat,
Straight he would the reason know,
Why his guest behaved him so,
Failing thus in worship due
30 To the only God and true.
Cried the gaffer, 'Fire alone
Is the godhead that I own.'
Whereupon our zealous host,
Grieving to the uttermost,
Thrust the elder out of tent,
There to make experiment
Of the perils of the night,
Happen whatso happen might.
When his visitant was gone,
40 'Abraham,' said God anon,
'Where is he, the stranger, say?'
'Him,' quoth he, 'I put away,
Seeing he would not adore
Thee the true God evermore.'
Spake the Lord, 'If I have borne
With yon sinner, eve and morn,
Though he grieved me oft and sore,
Hundred winters, less or more,
Couldst not thou for one brief night

- 50 Brook the manners of a wight,
Who in all his life-day long
Never wrought thee aught of wrong?
Thus spake he, the Lord of glory,
Whereupon, so saith my story,
Abraham sped on the track
Of that stranger, brought him back,
Bidding him, as in he went,
Welcome once more to his tent.
Host was never half so fain,
60 As now he, to entertain.
Soon he taught his guest aright
Touching God, true Source of Light.
Therefore, sirs, go do as he:
And your deed of charitie,
Shall win guerdon (sure I am)
Of the God of Abraham.

FINIS.



